

What's Happening: Advance Appropriations for the Indian Health Service

Category: Policy Blog

written by Meredith Raimondi | December 19, 2022

- Advance Appropriations for the Indian Health Service is the most impactful policy that Congress can do for Native communities this year.
- We can't let our momentum fade during this critical time.
- Now is the time to keep the pressure on Congress.

1 Big Thing: Congress has reached a deal on the omnibus

The Latest: Congressional leaders agreed to a government funding framework for a year-end omnibus spending package. ([Top appropriators clinch deal on government funding framework](#))

What's next: This week, Congress is finalizing the details of the framework, and it's important that Congress hear from you about why stable funding for the Indian Health Service (IHS) should be on the must-have list.

Last week: The Native American Caucus sent a [bipartisan letter](#) from nearly 30 Members of Congress to leadership to request advance appropriations for IHS in the end-of-year package.

This week: The National Indian Health Board sent an updated letter with nearly 140 groups, including Tribes, Urban Indian Organizations, and other supporters to [Congress](#) and the [White House](#) reiterating the need for stable funding for IHS this year:

- "Each day without full funding, with only temporary or no funding from the Continuing Resolutions or government shutdowns, is a step backward for Indian health care systems. Health care service delivery, administrative functions, and other operations are significantly impeded, delayed, or disrupted during periods of Continuing Resolutions or government shutdowns to the detriment of the American Indian and Alaska Native patients."

What can you do?



It's time to take action: We urge you to contact your Member of Congress and request that they support including advance appropriations for IHS in the FY 2023 final spending package. You can use the text below as a template to call and/or email your Members of Congress.

- **Step 1:** Find your Representative [here](#) and your Senators [here](#).
- **Step 2:** Use the call script and copy the email below.
- **Step 3: Call and email.** Use the call script to call your Members of Congress. Next, copy and paste the email into the form on their contact page and send.

Call Script

“(Introduce yourself). It is time that the federal government protect healthcare funding for Native Americans as it does for other health programs. Please let leadership know that advance appropriations for the Indian Health Service must be in the final spending package. Not another Native life should be lost due to budget uncertainty. Can I count

on your support?"

Email to Your Representative and Senators

Dear [Member of Congress],

As an Indian health advocate, I respectfully request you ensure the inclusion of advance appropriations for the Indian Health Service (IHS) in the upcoming Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 final spending package.

The Indian health system, including IHS, Tribal facilities, and urban Indian organizations (UIOs), is the only major federal health care provider funded through annual appropriations. If IHS were to receive advance appropriations, it would not be subject to government shutdowns, automatic sequestration cuts, and continuing resolutions as its funding for the next year would already be in place. We need this to protect Native lives!

Please do what's right for American Indians and Alaska Natives by ensuring that advance appropriations for IHS can finally be made a reality this year.

Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,
[contact information]

Do more! Visit our social media toolkit and

Thank you for your advocacy. Your outreach on this is invaluable to providing greater access to health care for all American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Why does the Indian Health Service need advance appropriations?

The Indian health system, including IHS, Tribal facilities, and urban Indian organizations (UIOs), is the only major federal healthcare provider funded through annual appropriations.

- Short-term budgets cause delayed funding to Indian Health Care Providers that can impact service delivery for patients and families. This is unacceptable.
- If IHS were to receive advance appropriations, it would ensure continuity of care for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Over 50% of Native Veterans use the Indian health system for care. VA health funding is protected, but Congress doesn't protect Native health care. This is unacceptable for our heroes.

Native communities have experienced [deaths](#) due to government shutdowns in the past. Five deaths during the last government shutdown is too many.

By the numbers: According to a recent CDC [study](#), Native Americans experienced the biggest drop in life expectancy of any population in the past two years— decreasing by 6.6 years between 2019-2021!

The bottom line: The lives of Native people should not be subject to politics. We need this to protect Native people and preserve access to health care.

Resources

- [NCUIH Advance Appropriations Website](#)
- [IHS Advance Appropriations Infographic](#)

Native Lives Can't Wait



During the White House Tribal Nations Summit, Native leaders gathered to call on Congress to take action now:

Congressional leaders support stabilizing health care delivery for the Indian Health Service.



Senator Dianne Feinstein 

@SenFeinstein



Congress must include advanced appropriations for the Indian Health Service in any end-of-year government-funding bill. We can't allow budget delays and political games to affect anyone's health care. We must ensure the Indian Health Service is funded.

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The White House supports advance appropriations. Secretary Becerra [said](#):

It's an imperative to be able to provide health care regardless of what the political climate is in Washington, DC. So our job is to continue to push the President's agenda of having mandatory funding for Indian country. And if we can't get Congress to go all the way to mandatory funding, at least give us advanced appropriations. So that this way Indian country has a way to foresee what's coming for the next year.

Let's keep going and make advance appropriations for the Indian Health Service a reality this year.